

ERIC, YOU ROLLED A ONE!!

THE VOICE OF DOOM

#89

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by BRUX

I'm afraid I'll have to open this issue with a pair of apologies. This is the mid-monthly I promised with all of your recent (and in a few cases not-so-recent) letters; however, it doesn't contain all of your letters. I fit in what I could, but there is still a whole gallon of stuff left over, so if you sent it and it's not in here, I ask for your further patience. Eventually, I'll get everything caught up. The other matter is a bit more serious. My typewriter broke down shortly before I finished typing VD #87, so parts of that issue and #88 were very hard to read. The typewriter was striking the ditto master so hard that it was punching holes right through it on certain letters. I rectified this by putting a blank sheet of paper over the ditto master as I typed, but the result was near illegibility on certain pages. (I had to retype the last 18 pages of #88 and take them to the printer, they were so bad. Grrrr.) Alas, certain pages of this issue were typed before the typer finally got itself fixed, so that some of you may have a bit of trouble with the letter col this time around. If you come across any pages that you cannot read, let me know and I'll do what I can. Fair enough? The typer is fixed as I type this, so future issues should not suffer from this ailment.

Circulation here hit an all-time high of 132 with #87, primarily as a result of the fact that the issue was free and therefore went to several people who expired the issue before. It's dropping now and I expect that trend to continue since there won't be any openings here for a loooooong time. Speaking of the free issue, one person (Brian Lorber, I think) thanked me for it. You're welcome, Brian. I guess everyone else was too grossed out by the nasal article...

Since this is kind of a clearinghouse issue, I'm holding out the Dooms of the Year results till next time (hopefully) and getting in as many letters as I can. There will be a brief review of BRUXCON and ByrneCon, both of which will probably be written up in more detail elsewhere (such as No Fixed Address and Anduin). Additionally, there will be an article of sorts on some of my philosophies on publishing and GMing, in response to certain people's questions at ByrneCon and some comments that have been published elsewhere (e.g. in North South West George). The questions discussed will be of the sort that I find fascinating and that many others find boring. Oh, well.

The Voice of Doom is a journal of postal Diplomacy published every now and then by Bruce Linsey, 73 Ashuelot St., Apt. 3, Dalton, MA 01226. Phone (413) 684-0567. Subs are 10 issues for \$5.00. Standbys are wanted. There are no game openings, nor will there be any for an awfully long time.

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NOTE: My correct addressee is the one in Massachusetts -- I'm just using up some old return address stickers for the next two or three issues...

Um, ignore the note at the bottom of page 1, which was typed up several days before this page. As it turns out, this issue will fly without an envelope due to its size (24 pages). An envelope would up the postage cost by 17¢ apiece. All our subscribers will receive this issue naked.

I need some more volunteers for my standby list, rather desperately. If all of my players were to resign en masse right now and be replaced from the standby list, and then all of the replacements were to resign and be replaced with more people from the standby list, and then all of the standbys for the departed standbys for the original players were to quit as well, I'd be out of luck as there would only be two or three standbys left on the list. Help out your poor GM. Sign up for the VD standby list today! Who knows -- the position you have from Civil Disorder may be your own.

Joan Extrom, Rt. 1 Box 26W, Philomath, OR 97370 (phone: (503) 929-3223) has asked me to mention that if you're the type of player who enjoys picking up the little bits and pieces of your ex-ally, you may want to attend LeparCon at her house on March 16-18. LeparCon -- the only hobby gathering where you can truly give your opponents the finger. Just be careful about bending your ally's ear too much...

Yes, I just realized that the BRUXCON and ByrnesCon writeups have to fit on this page. BRUXCON was pretty wild. Attendees included Brian Lorber, Steve Hutton (from Canada!), Eric Kane, Mike Barne, Jim Makino, Ted Furey, BRUX himself, and by Kane's terrible face, all the way from California. We spent a fair bit of time singing the Beatles songs from the play in VD #88, but unfortunately were drowned out by some strange sounds emitting from Brian's throat. Play one Dippy game, which ended in a 7-way draw. Your humble editor, as Turkey, opened with A Con-Smy, A Smy, Poot, F Ank-Gee and still made it to the end-game. Now, if the game had lasted till '04...

Played a Risk game in which I went all out to wipe Eric Kane's units from the board. Staged a massive attack which covered most of the world, and it finally, after fifteen minutes of furious fighting boiled down to my last possible attacking unit against his last possible defender. Me being the attacker, I had to beat his die roll or lose the game. I rolled a two and nearly died. But my fright hurried to midway instants later. Eric rolled, and the room reverberated with cries of:

ERIC, YOU ROLLED A ONE!

The celebration continued boisterously for several minutes, until a phone call from the tenant in the apartment below me reminded us that it was 1 AM and he was trying to sleep. Other than that incident, which Eric will never be permitted to forget, the high point of the con was when the toilet overflowed in the middle of the night and Brian and I went searching for a plunger at 4 in the morning. (I didn't find one.) Took the whole gang out for lobster bisque, but no one liked it as well as I did. Oh well. Brian fell twice on the driveway, which was a sheet of ice. Ty nearly missed his train when he left to visit Nelson Heintzman in Buffalo. Mike stabbed me, Steve was one of those brave souls who took my side when we started arguing about the merits of strict GMing (thus ending an anarchy game which I was on the way to winning), and Eric rolled a one. We're doing it again next year. It'd all better show up or else.

New Year's at Kathy's was exciting, to say the least. I got to give Jon Boardman a ride home one night, thus proving that even nonexistent people can drive. Robert Sachs was there, and provided us all with lots of entertainment. He's a funny little man who is obsessed with forming committees and spreading the word about how Rod Walker is not a member of the Diplomacy hobby. Robby is going to get me a position on the New York Gaming Board, though, so I shouldn't speak too ill of him. This ByrnesCon was a first for me in that I didn't meet anyone there who I'd never met before. I must be getting old. We didn't even take our traditional wee-hours ride through Harlem. Had a semi-heated discussion one night regarding GMing practices. It was pretty much me against everyone else in the room (except for Julie Martin, who surprised me by agreeing with me on several points) since Steve Hutton hadn't arrived by then. I'm proud to say that I more than held my own, too. More on this later.

The Gossip Column

From Bob Ouch (11/17/83):

Dear Bruce,

Issue #86 was great, but I really didn't enjoy #85 at all. It was way too long. That's what she said. Seriously, I like what I've read, though I still haven't had the time to sit down and finish it.

So who asked you to plug Woodpecker? I didn't expect you to, especially after you read it. I seriously thought about not even sending it out, as I was afraid certain people might be offended, among them you, maybe Caruso and Byrne, maybe Berch. But then I thought, what the hell, if they don't like it they can just write me off as an asshole and leave it at that. I don't mind the label. I just want you to know that I meant no harm by it. In fact, the only negative feedback so far was yours. Everyone else said they loved it.

Hey, Joan Ekstrom, I was married for two years and I don't think it's a safe assumption that marriage...oh, never mind, those were miserable days, and I guess even I got laid back then. Just not by my wife.

Bruce, I think you're on to something. What a fantastic discovery! Imagine, friends, now you too can avoid the grave threat an earthquake poses by simply hopping in the shower. Take it from BHK, you'll be safe there. I can see it now. The tremors begin, and suddenly whole families pile into the shower, and not a minute too soon! As the house crumbles around them, they frolic in their asylum. "Could you scrub my back for me please, father?" Just one question. How does one know when it's over?

It's nice to see you and Kathy are friends once more. I expected as much, since you changed your editorial policy. I know she objected to the controversy in the old VJ. She even wrote a pretty good article about same in Retail a few months back. Pretty soon you and Dick will kiss and make up, and then, who knows...another new subber. Jack Masters! Masters for Dookie of the Year! Right on, Brucceronic!

Did you hear about the latest study on stress? It concludes that Arizona is a high-stress area, in fact, the worst in general. Nevada was #1, I believe. Shit, I moved out here to escape the hustle-bustle of city life, now I have to move again. I've been unable to sleep nights since I heard. Do I sound uptight to you? I know I feel tense now. You know the feeling; your heart's in your throat and your gut's tied in a knot. Man, where did I put my valium? I know they're around here someplace. None...

I have mixed feelings on the reverse discrimination issue. I agree that the repression existed and was unjust, but the idea that future generations should pay for the mistakes of their ancestors doesn't make sense at all. Also, on the occupational level, it is a dangerous policy to offer preferential treatment to minorities. In theory, when two equally qualified persons apply for a position and one is a minority, the job goes to the minority. In practice, what happens more often than not is that the minority, for whatever reason, is less qualified but is given the position anyway to satisfy a quota. Does it make sense to have the less competent rule the competent? It's like the old joke about the retarded black woman, but I won't get into that.

I suppose I've bent your ear enough for one letter. Have fun at ByrneCon. I often wondered why Caruso never got any billing, but I guess if they called it CarusoCon people would go to Judy Caruso's house instead. Coughlan would love that.

I guess you're not a dick,
Bob

((Coming from you, that's truly a compliment. Thanks.

I don't recall giving you any "negative" feedback on your fake, other than to say that fakes generally are in overabundance and Woodpecker didn't stand out above the rest. And the quake is over when the curtain falls.))

From Jim Williams (11/11/83):

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Dear Bruce,

After three days of dedicated reading, I finally waded my way through all million and one pages of the anniversary issue of VD. I couldn't have made it, were it not for the excellence of the writing. I was particularly impressed with the submissions of Eli Whobel, and I enjoyed every one of them. I also liked John Kador's account of his trip to Peru, particularly so because it was similar to my own vacation to Guatemala a few years back. Someday, I may write of that little trip.

There were so many things I found to comment on, that this will end up being a rather lengthy letter. Oh well, I'm sure you won't mind.

I am astounded when I read of people who believe that the white males of today must pay for the sins of white males who came before them. Of course, I don't see any of these righteous souls offering to give up their jobs or their money to aid the cause of righting past injustices. When will people learn that one wrong is not corrected by adding more wrongs to it? Who can say that because of the sins of some long-dead rednecks and some present-day prejudiced jerks, that I must pay?! How can anyone justify this insanity?

I am the most unprejudiced person I know. I could document some proof but I'm not going to, so just take my word for it. I have seen both sides of this issue, and came away empty on both counts. I'll explain my situation and let you all see why I might be a trifle bitter.

My wife, as some people know, is Spanish. To be more specific, she's of Guatemalan descent. She has worked at Amoco for 16 years, compared to my 11 years. She is a great worker, almost unrivaled, in fact. Her performance is up to a point that was once considered unattainable. Her reward for her excellent work has been being passed over for three promotions that went to two men and a white female (who happened to be screwing the boss) with 7 years less seniority with Amoco.

Then came "affirmative action". Federal investigators came to check us out, and lo and behold, they found an almost perfect worker having her career being raped by the company. They checked further and told my wife that awards would be made. The company admitted that Marti was wronged, and the Feds and Amoco sat down to determine how to right the wrong. One investigator confided that she would receive a promotion (much deserved) and a few thousand dollars.

A funny thing happened, though. Jimmy Carter lost the election to Ronnie-boy, and suddenly the investigators vanished, the case was closed, and Marti received nothing. Nothing! Here was a case where an injustice was being corrected, not through further injustice, but by righting the wrong. That kind of affirmative action left with Carter, but quotes remain. (What I call "negative action".)

I leave Marti's case where it remains today, and begin my story. My career with Amoco progressed well, with good raises and promotions coming my way rapidly. Although my work didn't change in the office, the rating I received for it took a turn for the worse about 3 years ago. Coincidentally, that was the time when a new supervisor took over. He was black.

I have two co-workers who do the same thing I do on the same shift. One is black and one is a white girl who lives with a black man (yes, they are engaged). These two co-workers had just been promoted into the job we now all do, while I had three years of experience at the time our new supervisor took over.

In 3 years my career has suffered setback after setback while oddly enough, my co-workers outlook has brightened. The black guy I work with (who happens to be a good friend) is and always has been mistake-prone. My female co-worker and everyone else in the computer room were shocked when they found out this guy was being considered for promotion while I was not. My black friend was equally surprised that our female co-worker was being considered as well, and not me. Neither one of them got the job. I was considered the favorite by the rank and file of the computer room until it was discovered that I wasn't being considered.

Recently, the Credit Card Center has been feeling the economic crunch and as a result our two centers are combining. This has caused some shifting around of personnel since we have almost 2 of every position available. (Some people are not moving here from Raleigh, though, which makes some jobs safer.)

Well, when it came time to fill the slots in my area, my two co-workers survived. I did not and I will soon be demoted. The worker who took my spot? Oh yeah, she's a girl that was promoted less than a year ago and who presently serves as a backup to our area. Six years on my job meant nothing.

Amoco has a policy now to "treat all employees fairly regardless of race, color, or creed." Yes, they have their quotas. I have a few friends who are in management that confirm that "unofficial" quotas are indeed in effect. I am presently filing a protest with Amoco and considering legal action because no, I do not feel that me and my family have to suffer because of someone else's warped, asinine sense of justice. If more people shared that idiotic ideal that makes me pay for my father's mistakes, who knows, we might even return to the days when the family of a criminal suffered the same fate as he. Perhaps we could see indentured servitude make a comeback, where descendants would remain enslaved until a debt was settled.

In answer to Mark Lew's assertion that one must wish to be black to convince him of discrimination against whites...bullshit! There is no logic to that statement at all! If God were to come down and tell me he was going to make me black, I'd accept it and my career would skyrocket. But I am what I am and not wanting to be something else does not change the fact that I'm paying for someone else's mistakes.

This is one of the few things that I've disagreed with Berch on lately, but he's got a long way to go to convince me that I must suffer in this manner. His comparison to a race is close, but still off base. My forefathers won their races already, because of their skill or other "horses" handicaps. This is no longer the same race, though, Mark. Every generation begins a new race, and you advocate giving me more weight in the middle of my race. If I've got a lead, it's because I earned it. Who among you can tell me I didn't? Enough, though, on this lamentable topic.

On season separation requests, I love the idea that Mark Lew attributed to Cheesecake that players must submit the most likely retreat results and their orders based on them, and a separation request would be granted only if something else arises. I suggested to Ron Brown a few months ago that no vote on a draw proposal should count as an abstention. Someone proposed the same thing somewhere in VD, but I can't find it (wonder why?). To detail it further, if no one votes, the proposal fails due to lack of interest (better in that respect than NWR=yes). A GM may add an additional restriction that $\frac{1}{2}$ of the surviving countries must vote yes. Of course, one "no" would still shoot it down.

Moving right along, the military and U.S. involvement have received a lot of press lately. I'm not going to comment on that now, but I would like to say something about a related topic, that of our new "sophisticated" weaponry. American technology has always been superior, but converting that into things that work seems almost impossible.

I am sickened by private contractors who milk out government contracts for all they're worth and in return deliver an inferior quality product. The M1 tank, the C-130 cargo plane (or whatever it is), have both been shining examples of effectiveness losing out to sophistication.

What good will these weapons or transports do us if they won't work in battle? We have tanks that can go 100 miles or so before refilling, cargo planes and fighters that spend half of the time grounded for repairs, and many other "technological marvels" that are simply ineffective over the long haul. All of this for the pursuit, by unscrupulous businessmen, of the almighty dollar. If you ask me the average person in this country has more to fear from big business than it does from the Soviets or any outside aggressor.

If this country ever falls, you can bet that business will be behind it. The longer Republicans like Reagan stay in office, the stronger business gets and the

closer we get to a completely business-dominated existence. Government "of the people" may soon be a thing of the past...

Finally, Garzy Hamlin is a great writer! I have always felt this and his humorous story about putting "some oil" in a truck was merely confirmation of what I knew.

That's it for now. Keep up the good work, BILK! Issue #85 of Voice of Doon will long be remembered by many as a best ever in the history of the hobby.

((Whoa, there! Alright, it was decent, but let's not go overboard.

You have every reason to be bitter, and to take action, over your treatment at Amoco. I agree with your views on this matter a hundred per cent.

As for the situation regarding defective or inferior U.S. military equipment, let's put some more blame where it belongs. If the government is willing to accept inferior weaponry, then it's hard to blame businesses for selling it to. So suppose Honest Joe runs business X and submits his company's bid to Uncle Sam, taking into account what it will cost his company to produce good equipment. Does he get the contract? Of course not. The government chooses a lower bidder, one who will make cheap equipment cheaply.

I don't have the slightest idea of what I'm talking about.

The solution you mention regarding separation requests is all right, though I prefer the way I have it now. As for Garzy Hamlin, he's right up there among the most entertaining writers in the hobby. I just wish we could see a little more of his work, more often.))

The following letter was sent to Alex from Greg Ellis. It is printed here with Alex's and Greg's permission, slightly edited:

Dear Alex,

I have been intending to write you for quite some time now, but school and work must come first. I have always been impressed by your writing, but never so much as the column in the anniversary issue. As a teenager, I suppose that you would quite naturally look up to the "grown-ups" that you know as examples of what to be like. Your reference group was greatly expanded through the hobby, and now you are "disappointed and disillusioned" greatly. Can't say as I blame you. I too became disillusioned after my first encounters with the real world. It seemed to me that it was just like high school, only worse. Everywhere you go you will find the game players, and I don't mean Diplomacy. Americans are generally in good shape; we don't have to worry about where our next meal is coming from, we have very little chance of being invaded, and we enjoy the highest standard of living in the world. I guess that home sapiens are bred as problem solvers, and in the absence of real problems they make up some. That is what I believe has happened to you and Bruce and the others. Someone had nothing better to do with his time than to talk about someone else, and a problem was invented.

Now I don't know the entire story behind the problems with you and ((some other people)), and quite frankly, I don't care. But I do think that your reaction isn't the proper one. You have said that you enjoy writing. Why are you allowing someone else to take that joy away from you? I have very much enjoyed reading what you wrote. Why must I be deprived of my joy because of a third party?

You are obviously mature for your age, and probably more mature than most of the hobby. You will find this sort of bickering, backstabbing and politicking everywhere you go. Will you always react the same way? I hope not. If you enjoy writing and seeing your words published, then do it and damn the rest! If you no longer enjoy writing, then quit and damn the rest! What you do in this life is up to you, so don't let ANYBODY tell you what to do with it!

I follow some very simple policies. I am as completely honest as I can be at all times; I think before I act; and I always do what is best for me, because I can never

figure out what is best for anyone else. My wife and I have one of the best relationships I have ever seen, and for one reason: we can be honest with each other. So many people play games with each other. Some even believe that they can help another person out by lying to them. I consider myself to be an intelligent person, but I am not smart enough to decide matters for someone else. I give them all the facts as I see them and let them decide for themselves. This doesn't always work, but the other way rarely ever works.

I also follow these policies in my game-playing and letter-writing. The only thing in your last column that disturbed me (other than the fact that you intend to quit!) was the comment to the effect that you trust certain people whenever you write to them personally. If I read that correctly then you are writing things to people you have never met, and trusting them not to pass along what you have said. What do you say to these people, that truly needs to be said, that you wouldn't want someone else to find out? I would suggest that anything that you would be unwilling to have published shouldn't be said at all.

I really didn't mean for this to be as preachy as it is turning out to be. It was meant to be encouraging and full of praise! I will try harder next time. My friends down here have to put up with my preaching every day, so be glad that you live in New York.

If you do decide to write again, I would be most interested to hear your response to the latest hunting article. I found it very hard to argue with. Did you know that they do the same thing to Elephants in Africa? I have always liked Elephants, which probably explains my Republican leanings, and I actually saw 50 or so killed on "Believe It or Not" the other night. The show came on right before "The Day After" and I was more upset by the Elephants!

Well, I have to run. I hope this wasn't taken the wrong way. If you have ever heard the song "Garden Party" by Rick Nelson then you know what I am trying to say. I am sending a copy of this to BRUX for the mine. If you do or do not want it printed, just let him know. I would like for some of the people out there who really need to see this advice to see it, and I know that my tone was quite a bit softer with you than it would have been had I written them directly. Explaining their behavior to you comes out better than explaining it to them. Take care, and I hope we all get a chance to say we're sorry before it's too late -- but then again, we all have so much to be sorry for!

One closing thought: small minds speak of people; average minds speak of things; great minds speak of ideas.

((Alex received a large number of responses to her last column, many of them very nice like this one. A common thread ran throughout most of the letters she got: write again if she wants to. And that's how it should be. VD will always welcome Alex's Column if and when she wants to write it. It was always one of my favorite parts of the mine. I have discussed this with Alex, and although she hasn't the time to write regularly any more, she is not ruling out an occasional article for us.

Actually, I don't agree entirely with everything Greg said. We do not exist in a vacuum; other people can and do affect our enjoyment of certain activities. In real life we must sometimes put up with people or situations we dislike. In a hobby such as ours, if people make it unenjoyable, we can leave it. It's easy to say "damn the rest" -- but it's not always so easy to do.

Greg's advice about trusting people whom one has never met is very wise. There are very few people in the hobby that I have never met, and would trust with my personal secrets. In fact, there are very few that I have met whom I would so trust. Alex herself is a very trusting person (probably because she is very trustworthy), and I think that she and many others would do well to heed Greg's words on that point.

Alex thanks (and so do I) all of the people who were kind enough to reply to her last article: Peter Ansoff, Fred Davis, Eric Kane, Jim Williams, and Steve Knight, to name just a few. And my thanks to Greg for letting me print this.))

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From Ivo Bouman (11/6/83):

Dear BHEX:

Getting your issue 83, as well as the VD Reader Response Poll, I found enough reason to write you again. I know you've asked for a quick response, and I'm sorry I didn't make that. Well, you see, I only got your VD 83 in October, and by then I was heavily studying for an exam. But thank God I've done that one now, so time to get involved in Dip again.

Now before I say a few things about the poll, first let me explain the picture I included. It's not a good one, but practically the only one with me in it that I have a negative of, and it is appropriate since it shows a few other players as well. Okay, let me first tell you who is in the picture. I'm the one with the blue Boy Music T-shirt. This picture was taken last February. We have official championship matches every year. This year we had two "semifinals", with twenty-eight people taking part both times, from which two times three players qualified for the finals, to be held December 17. The first semifinals were in Groningen in February. We used a place called "The Walrus", which is kind of a bar where all kinds of mini games are played, like chess, draughts, Go, and Diplomacy. That was a great environment! We played both on Saturday and Sunday and the three people having scored best qualified for the finals. Now the picture shows them, as well as last year's champion, who automatically qualifies. I'll give you the names: From left to right you see Rob van der Burg, Teijo Doornkamp, me and our defending champion Jan Foringa. Last month the other semifinals were played, so now it is well-known who will be playing the finals in December. The finals last year, that I was lucky enough to qualify for too, meant to me the best face-to-face game I've ever played in, even though I only came in sixth. Apart from this competition, which is nice, I particularly like the atmosphere that these weekends distinguish. And I am apparently not the only one who thinks so, since besides three weekends for the actual championship there are being organized several "cons" as well. That definitely is a big advantage of living in a country as small as the Netherlands! You only have to drive for at most three hours to get wherever you want to go. Next month we are organizing a con again, and we are going to try to play a variant in which fourteen players play one game. Couples are formed to command one country. That means you have better possibilities to negotiate, but also that you have to agree with your partner on what moves to make! I'm very curious how that's going to be. In the past we have also played the stab variant face-to-face (the variant where only the moves obstructed are visualized on the board), which appeared to be great fun!

Now let me tell you what I think of Voice of Doom. First I'll give an overall impression, then I'll give some comments on a couple of questions on your form. The Voice of Doom as a whole I enjoy tremendously! It supplies me with an immense amount of reading-fun. I myself like (as you know) the game of Diplomacy a lot, but am also very interested in any other subject -- well, almost any other subject, and I feel very much related to the American way of thinking. So that VD especially provides me with is a chance to read a lot about all that at once, not having to correspond with all those people personally. I guess, by the way, that I've answered question 10.a. with this. ((The question read, "What do you enjoy most about VD?")) As far as 10.b. goes let me say that there is nothing I really hate, but things that I don't particularly care for are the endlessness of house-rule discussions, GMing discussions, etc. I am interested in it, though, but sometimes it seems to get out of hand, as far as quantity goes. To comment on a couple of questions, let me briefly give you my opinion on those matters. We also have house-rules, quite specific on certain matters, but not that specific. What I consider most important of them is our last rule, in which we put it very clearly that in cases of doubt we are the ones that are right. That is of course closely related to our GMing. Of course we do not accept just everything, but in general we consider it in the interest of all players to have a good game. And

to accept late orders may perhaps diminish one's chances of victory, but it is to the benefit of the game (after all, who wants to win by an undesired NMR of one's opponent?). Because of the aforementioned I would rule A Boh S A Sil and A Sil S A Pru-War as correct, however pointing out to the player that he shouldn't do that. ((You've confused me. I don't see anything wrong with those orders either, unless you mean that they imply A Pru-War as well.)) But Bruce, realize when you read this that I completely agree with you when you say that people playing in VD should know you are strict, and thus cannot hold that against you when they're becoming a victim of it.

There is another matter that I want to comment on, and that is the controversies you are dealing with, or dealt with. It is interesting for us to learn from you Americans how it can go. Fortunately in the Netherlands we haven't had anything like a "feud" yet. ((I've then discussed some of the hobby's feuds in more detail, and then concludes...)) You all behave like idiots!

Well, let me finish this letter with something a little more "light". My plans for next year of going to the States again. I guess they are pretty low now, since I will probably go to Norway for a few weeks, which will be in July, thus leaving me little time to plan another vacation. But then again, this year I first booked a vacation in Switzerland in August, and finally decided (three weeks before leaving...) to fly off to San Francisco in April! Might I do so again, I will probably go to the Southeast, Florida or something. The first time I was in the U.S. I travelled around the New England region, thus passing through Albany. The highlights of that trip were Acadia National Park and most of all, the rafting trip I made on Kennebec River, Maine! That year I also visited Montreal and Quebec. And since I crossed the continent last year, thus seeing the "Wild West", and this year I travelled through the Southwest, I figure that if I go again, it should be the Southeast. Thanks for the invitation anyway, and wish me you never know, you just might get a phone call next week that I'm at the Albany Greyhound station...

Just a last question. As I said before, VD offers some great reading material. Can I translate an article from it every now and then, of course naming the source and the writer?

Well, that's about it. I hope all this makes a little sense. As we say in Dutch: "Today I sat on my talk-chair."

Keep smiling.

((You're lucky. Today I sat on my ditto machine, and damaged my reproduction equipment. Sure, feel free to translate anything you want from VD into Dutch!

I hope you do manage to make it to the lovely (?) Northeast when you come to the States. Got yourself to the Pittsfield station and I'll rush right over to get you! (But if you give me more advance notice, I'll be able to plan to show you around.)

I hope you aren't offended by my deletion of your comments on feuds; I'd rather not print that stuff any more and many letters recently have suffered similar fates... You are correct to observe, though, that some of us behave like idiots sometimes.

Thanks for the photo; I imagined you much older. It's interesting to hear more about the Dutch hobby and its development. Keep us tuned, please.

Your philosophy of deadlines can lead to problems. How late is "OK"? Two hours? Then if your stated deadline is 8 o'clock, your real deadline is 10 and you're deceiving your players to tell them otherwise. Five minutes? Then you should tell your players truthfully that the deadline is 8:05, not 8:00. I'm sorry if it sounds hard-arsed, but a GM has to draw the line somewhere or the game would be delayed indefinitely, and since the line must be drawn, he might as well tell the players truthfully where. Kind of like some of the states here, who tell you that the speed limit is 55 miles per hour, and then hypocritically let motorists get away with 56.

Hm. There I go with one of those Gting discussions you don't care for...))

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From Peter Ansoff (11/17/83):

Dear BRUX,

I don't care what everybody says -- it's hard to stir up controversy in the pages of VD. I mean, I beated the mighty BRUX on the subject of houserules, and what did I get? One offhand remark from Eric Kane -- and he ended up agreeing with you!! Guess I'll have to try something else. Let's see, I'm in favor of ERA, legalized abortion, handgun registration, and tax reform, and I'm against school prayer amendments, the exclusionary rule, and tuition tax credits. Any takers?

I would like to stand by for the SIRIUS game. For some strange reason I expect that you may be wrong about it being over too fast.

((Sorry, it's over; the houssrules won.))

From Ed Wrobel (11/24/83, excerpts, ellipses expunged):

Dear Brucifer,

I've finally waded through your anniversary issue. I understand all the hoopla. I enjoyed several of the articles. "How Not to Get a Puppet" was very good. I also got a tickle out of the "You Missed the Deadline" cartoon, Berch on accepting/rejecting articles, your own "Real Publishers Don't...", the "For Better..." cartoon, and the euphemisms. Gary's play was hilarious. Quite flattering to be portrayed as the representative of sophistry.

How delighted I was to learn that I have the fifth seed for Doomie of 1983 "for double-ordering units", for I am a Doomie and I have double-ordered units. It is true that I receive Voice of Doom and that several years ago my orders were disregarded by a gamesmaster for misuse of holding and supporting. Your readers can't write.

I would be remiss to chastize Ms. Extrom for her rantings and ravings. It is surprising that she failed to notice my tongue. Further, it would appear that Me. Extrom and I are, to some degree, mates sexually. I (am) a working model of abnormal psychology.

Kudos to Nelson Heintzman for his very cogent commentary on the effects of racial slavery on U.S. economic expansion. The emphasis on "righting past wrongs" misses the point of aid programs to blacks. The purpose is to ameliorate the present-day effects of those wrongs both past and present. We are not discussing a laboratory experiment, a mathematical equation or a computer program, but the real world of today. Personal prejudice is not the same as institutional racism. Perhaps a different kind of example would be persuasive to those sharing your political beliefs. Let's hypothesize that lily-livered liberals (President Extrom, Vice-president Wrobel, National Security Advisor Walker) take over the U.S. and disarm unilaterally. Then the Russians and Cubans conquer the country and enslave the population. They bring in their own to colonize and act as a ruling elite. Americans have no rights; their property is seized; educational and health systems are allowed to deteriorate (except for the ruling elite); your own great-great-great-great grandmother (then a young woman) is raped by a Cuban. There is no legal redress. You and your ancestors can pass for Latinos.

After centuries the yoke begins to slip some. Americans gain some rights. They can drink out of the same water fountains as a Russian. Their athletes can compete in professional organizations with communists. Eventually they dare to engage in mass civil disobedience. Many are beaten, maimed, killed but some gain a measure of political power. A few Russians and Cubans (labeled "American sympathizers" by their hard-line colleagues) are persuaded that Americans should not be treated as second-class citizens. Still it seems absurd to integrate schools. The children fight and even if the schools aren't equal, they are separate. Besides, Russians and Cubans have the right to set up their own private schools. It would be ridiculous to bus Russians miles away to attend some dirty, dangerous American school. Why, they don't have enough books or teachers in those schools. And the teachers themselves are Americans, none of whom received training in the best universities. Well -- as an American who

can almost "pass" you gain some influence with sympathetic commies and rise to a position of power within the American community. But you are a bit radical at times. You maintain that the Russians and Cubans are wealthy not by virtue of genetic superiority but through expropriation of property belonging to your American ancestors and through a disproportionate disposition of natural resources. You point out that Russian commissars and Cuban tradespeople are paid much more than Americans. You argue that the failure of Americans to pass the communist party entrance exam (and thus qualify for higher paying union jobs and slots in the bureaucracy) is not a result of innate inferiority but of centuries of oppression. Not only do you advocate equality for Americans, you want a redistribution of national wealth. You want more money for American schools and you want a few Americans sent to the Cuban universities for free. Even the American sympathizers think you have gone too far. "Unfair!" they charge. "Equality is one thing but you want reverse discrimination and the illegal seizure of the party's assets. Don't you know we are all equal here in this socialist workers paradise, comrade?" But you know that in reality some are more equal than others. You continue to agitate and are assassinated by a lone gunman who has no connection with the secret police. Very sad -- if only you had been reasonable. But take heart! Decades later a national holiday is declared in your honor (after Americans riot in the streets to protest the lack of progress on the "racial issue").

((I have a dream that were I in the position you describe, I would not argue in favor of a redistribution of the national wealth and I would not want a few Americans sent to Cuban schools for free. Having been the victim of prejudice and unfairness, and having seen my ancestors suffer through same, I would not want to achieve equality by inflicting hardships on others, unless those others were the same ones who had brought this unhappy situation upon me and mine. I therefore remain unpersuaded.

Good to finally see you agree that your units were double-ordered, and I'm glad you consider yourself a loyal, screaming Doonie. I knew all along that someone with your obvious penchant for fairness must eventually see the light.

As for anyone failing to notice your tongue, well, that must be difficult since constant motion tends to attract attention rather than deter it.

Enough of this. Doonies, Ed Wrobel is the publisher of the excellently-edited sine Politesse. Perhaps I should take editing lessons from him...))

From Bob Olsen (12/3/83, excerpt):

Dear BRUX,

Olga says that some of the other Nine Lives varieties (particularly the "Sliced Meat in Gravy" series -- turkey, beef, veal, etc.) are much better than Seafood Supper, which is only eaten by decadent cats who've been thrown out of the FSM. Also, Special Dinners brand is also coated with the real taste of milk, and is crunchy and will clean your teeth. Like me, she has a missionary zeal about her enthusiasms. When I told her you liked cat food, she said...well, never mind.

((I tend to disagree. The Seafood Supper I ate at Byrnecon was passable, though I've had much better. But I'm mildly allergic to Nine Lives and won't touch these days.

I've gotten to prefer dog food, anyway, and was disappointed that none was available at Kathy's house. Next time I may either bring my own or eat out. Thanks anyway for the advice.))

From Larry Peery (11/23/83 and 11/27/83):

Dear BRUK:

Received your issue number 85 today.

It was an interesting issue, to say the least. It reminded me of some of the old Xeros, back in the days when I was a college student and using the school's ditto machines. I have a soft place in my heart (or head) for ditto zines, although I don't think I could ever go back to the days when I used that process. It is so much easier just to take it to the printer and say, "Run it."

Obviously, I haven't read it all, I just glanced through it. I will read it and if need be get back to you with further comments. I didn't know you were doing anything like this. I had planned a large October mailing but my system is a lot different than yours. My last mailing ran around 160 pages but it was divided into four parts: the zine proper, the Peeri Power Pals insert, the IIRHF ((International Diplomacy Hall of Fame)) mailing, the Project Unicorn insert, and, for Europeans, a special Xanogogic International edition (double reduction). It took about 125 labels to get the first mailing out, followed by a 96 label second mailing. The second printing has gone out to about 2500 people who responded to the IN flyer or whatever.

I don't intend to do anything like that again, for a while. My next big issue probably won't be until 1987 when Xeno will be 20 and I will be 40. I haven't done a 100th issue yet either, although I didn't plan it that way. But I'll let Rod get his out of the way first. The feedback to the last issue has been most interesting. I haven't decided how I'm going to handle it. I was going to reprint verbatim all the comments that appeared in the zines and the comments from letters but it would have taken far too many pages to do it. So, I don't know.

I just finished typing up the Diplomacy Cookbook materials and it will make a nice little holiday mailing. Some of the recipes are very good.

The January Xeno will be much smaller than the last one. I'm hosting BeethovenCon here in two weeks. It will be a fun kind of event but we'll have a few visitors: Meinel is supposed to be here, Tighe said he is coming, and there will be the usual Los Angeles and Southern California people. Then over New Years I hope to get up to Langley's for DafCon. I understand Tallman is coming down from Seattle with a mob, and Gary Coughlan said he is coming from Memphis. So it should be fun. Jim is bringing down some back issues of VD and when he is done and I have seen what he has I'll be in touch with you about getting ahold of back issues for the Archives.

Those are the two big projects on hand. I'm trying to computerize the listing of my Archives. The first stage included stuff from the pre-1972 period and included some 2,000 issues of some 115 titles (not counting my stuff). The next batch is relatively current and includes another 115 or so titles and 1,500 or so issues from the last couple of years. Then I got to start going through the 20 or so cases of junk that I have sitting around. I stumbled over one case the other day when I was rummaging in the closet looking for a copy of SATPD for somebody. I finally got tired of moving it around so I looked inside to see what was in it. There were 250 issues of Graustark (50-300), issues of other zines starting with G-H. Somewhere there must be a real gold mine. When I finish this stuff I get to start on the stuff that will be coming from Don Miller's family and Scott Marley's collection (which is about as big as mine). Now you see what I mean when I say this will take a year or so.

The other project will either be the April Xeno or a separate book, a collection of some 15-20 variant Dippy games designed by Californians. It includes some of Rod's Imperialism series, some of my older variants, some from Anderson, Naus, and people in the Bay Area. In addition I have a couple of new ones. But I'm not rushing that project. It's kind of a fun trip.

I plan to do another Peeripoll late this year but other than that I have no plans for any great activities. I do hope to make it to Dallas in July although my stomach rebels every time I think about it.

How do you handle your archives? I'm thinking about doing a IRT ((??)) on that, one of these days.

Can you believe I got my first Christmas card yesterday? Groan...I also got some copies of Doodles Gin ads from New York which I am going to try and doctor into Doodles ads, just to aggravate Berch.

((From the other letter...)) And finally have had time to read all of VD #85. I have written a response, in the form of an article/libretto but it is going to be long, at least five to seven pages (short for me but long for most sines). If you'd like to you can have it for VD. Otherwise, I'll use it as the theme article for January's Xeno. It should set new records in the hobby for number of people it offends in one article. Snicker...

Of everything in the issue, Alex Lord's most impressed me.

((Well, anyone who feels that way can't be all bad, eh? You share that opinion with me and Steve Knight, at least.

I don't save my old sines; I sell them off in bundles. I've got a (big) box full of them left and hope to sell them all soon.

Your October issue sounds as though it must have been a lot of work. Congratulations. I doubt if I shall ever again go over a mere 50 or 60 pages.

As for back issues of VD, I regret to tell you that most are unavailable, at least at this time. I do have a few that Meinel probably doesn't. Let me know what you need. And good luck with your archives.))

From Eric Kane (11/28/83):

Dear ERIC,

...I'm embarrassed to say that I didn't catch the title of the last issue until I saw that my name was mentioned and then looked up. ((VD #86, p. 1)) Just for that, I'm going to send you this looong endgame statement to print up and retype. I should win the Doodle of the Year award after this issue!

Well, ByrneCon was a blast but you already knew that. I'll see you over the Christmas holidays, I presume.

Re: Walker's article, I wouldn't mind chucking all of you upstate hicks out of New York too. I think that we could separate New York City along with Long Island to form one state, and the rest of you could be another. We would become the Empire State and you could become New Yuki!

Racism? That is almost as boring a topic as religion, which is currently being discussed in the pages of Anduin.

I don't see how F Kis ((Hol?)) can be construed as anti-French or English. Whenever I play England and F/G sack me (which often happens to me), the German almost invariably opens to Den, to show France that he intends not to oppose his getting Bel. Also, how is assuring Russia Sweden too pro-Russian? The same might be said if France has moved to Pic and Bel ((Bur?)) and is trying to support into Bel? I agree that it is pretty close as to which is more "neutral", but if it kills me, I will get you to change at least one houserule so I can say I did so!

Your houserules are silly because you are going beyond the spectrum of unbiased adjudicator. As someone once said, the teacher in you has killed the GM. For chrissakes, I don't play Dip to have my orders graded!! Of course, if it will help me win games, who am I to complain...

((Sorry, but I view my refusal to fix errant orders as more "unbiased" than the actions of GMs who change players' orders to make them work. You still haven't shown me which houserules are silly, aside from the three or four which are intentionally so. I still view F Kis-Den as more "neutral" than F Kis-Hol, but we agree it's close.

I agree with your proposed division of New York State, but you can also have Westchester and Rockland counties and a small meat store in Rochester...))

From Wes Ives (12/3/83):

BRUX:

Thanks oodles for the HRS; I have plagiarized from them wholesale in the construction of the HRS for the Wordworks. On top of that, your zine has a good beat, and is easy to dance to, so here's \$5.00 for the next ten issues...

I'm enclosing a copy of the Wordworks HRS for you to gloat over; you and I seem to be of a mind when it comes to adjudication -- there ain't nothin' to compare with solid bureaucracy to keep one covered!

What follows is a letter I've been shopping around for the past month or so, seeking publicity for the now-organizing Diplomacy game on my computer system -- the Wordworks. The first game ended last month -- France won. There is considerable disagreement within the hobby as to whether e-mail games are "standard" postal Diplomacy. I, naturally, don't see any difference between e-mail and USPO mail, except that e-mail is faster and more likely to get there; however, my use of "nom de Dip" has muddied the waters somewhat -- especially since nearly everyone thinks that since players have to call the Wordworks in order to register their moves or (at least initially) contact the other players, that I must be conducting some sort of limited communications, Gunboat-type game. Add to that the unfortunate fact that the first WW game was a largely local affair, and thus would be irregular even if it hadn't been played by e-mail...well, there's a passle of confusion about those games. People are starting to come around, though.

You're welcome to reprint freely from this letter, but please be aware that much the same letter has gone to about ten other zines.

((And then the circular letter...)) I'm writing to you to invite you to subscribe to my new fansine, and to play the new Diplomacy game starting there. The game is Wordworks II, abbreviated "WW II"; the zine is -- well, this will take a little explanation...

I am editor, chief contributor, and publisher of The Wordworks, which I call an "on-line" magazine. It is an ELECTRONIC magazine, published on my home computer and distributed only to people who call my computer with their computer. The zine is published continuously, in that anyone can call in at any time and read the latest publications of The Wordworks; in practice, this means that the content is substantially changed every week or so, but "back issue" material is kept on-line for a considerable period.

The inaugural Wordworks game has just been completed, and I am now busy contacting anyone who might be interested in playing Wordworks II. The subscription rates to the Wordworks are unusual: there are none. All someone needs is a computer, a modem to connect it to the phone lines, and the willingness to pay moderate long-distance charges (you can call late at night in order to take advantage of the low rates). Callers to the Wordworks should call (919) 723-5275, at 300 or 1200 baud, with 8-bit words, one stop bit, and no parity. After a short introduction, the Wordworks will ask you for your password -- if you don't have a password (and a first-time caller won't, of course), then you just bypass this question. If you don't enter your password, the system will ask you for your first and last names, and then will check the list of all registered callers to see if you're known. Either way, you're then "in the system", and able to read the zine. You can write messages to the other players, or to the world at large, using either your real name, your head-of-state alias, or any pseudonym you want to dream up. First-time callers will often use the Help features, to find their way around the system.

When playing the Diplomacy game on the Wordworks, the players will not necessarily know each others' real names. House rules are available in one of the sections of the Wordworks when you call in, but basically, they work like this: each player, when he/she signs up, receives an official pseudonym along with his/her country assignment; this official "nom de Dip" will be something like "TSAR NICHOLAS" (for the player who

runs Russia), and all official correspondence between the Tsar and the Gamesmaster, and the Tsar and other players, is carried out under this pseudonym. I feel that this affords a certain amount of flavor to the game, and is a harmless affectation; in addition, it prevents groundless feuds. Not knowing the name of the person behind Italy forces a player to respond to the actions of Italy, not the person playing Italy, who may have been an enemy in a different world...of course, nothing prevents players from conducting perfectly secure and private negotiations with one another (via private messages left in the message-delivery system on the Wordworks, or, if so desired, by swapping true names and conducting phone negotiations).

Anyone who calls the Wordworks is welcome to comment on the game being played (or on anything else, for that matter); persons wishing to comment on the Diplomacy game may wish to sign up using a pseudonym (like, for instance, THE TIMES) in order to preserve their anonymity when commenting on the Diplomacy game. The institution of "press" is a well-founded tradition within the "Postal Diplomacy" hobby; after all, what self-respecting conqueror of Europe would leave home without a propaganda machine at his back? Press on the Wordworks is completely black; that is, there is no way of knowing where or from which power it originates -- or whether, really, the press even originates from a player! Unless a press organ is adopted by a head of state, there is no guarantee as to its origin, and it may even come from a non-player. Press, also, may be "private" -- which seems like a contradiction in terms, until the first time you log on to the system and find a message awaiting you from the "SWISS AMBASSADOR" warning you of "England's Foul Intent"...

Once again, calls to the Wordworks are free; there are no connect charges, and no subscription fees. All callers are welcome, as are any submissions, about anything; the Wordworks does not limit its letter column to discussions of Diplomacy. If you already have a telecommunications terminal, give us a call at (919) 723-2775. If you have questions, or don't have a phone and would like to get a monthly posting of activities from the Wordworks (there's a charge for that, to cover postage and hassle), just write to me: Wes Ives, 500 Lester Lane, Winston-Salem, NC 27103-0130.

((Interested Doomsies should get in touch with Wes, or with the Wordworks. I'm very interested in electronic mail Dippy, but I don't have the equipment to become involved at this time. It sounds like an intriguing way to play the game.

My own opinion on the "regularity" of e-mail games, alas, will disappoint Wes. I don't feel that e-mail is close enough to "real" mail to justify rating both types of games in the same category. "Irregular" sounds like too harsh a term for my tastes, but some distinguishing factor should be included to separate e-mail games from postal games when they are rated.

Having said that, I can't really think of a fundamental difference between the two -- just call it a radical difference in style.

But to me an even more important question is this: why worry about it? I have always felt, since entering the hobby, that too much emphasis is placed on "regularity" and the rating of games. This feeling came to light some months ago when Ronald Brown wrote in bitterly complaining that Don Horton's lack of concern had robbed him of a win when Glay and Pang was folded, when in fact he got the win -- it just didn't get rated. So I'll say to Wes about the same thing I said to Ronald: if the game is fun and if the winner wins it fair and square, that's what counts a lot more than whether some outsider (arbitrarily or otherwise) chooses to give it an "irregular" label. My, I'm vehement on this matter, aren't I? It's intentionally so, though; I think that ratings and rating systems do more harm than good in this hobby. People play the rating system rather than the game. God, I'm getting horribly sidetracked.

I think that we are going to see more and more electronic games being played as we move toward the 21st century, and as more people acquire home computers. While I view this as a good development, and wish to try it someday, I also hope that true Postal Diplomacy never dies out entirely. Nothing can replace the charm of getting a good old-fashioned letter -- or is it just me that's old-fashioned??))

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From Greg Ellis (11/22/83):

Dear RHIX,

Satire is such a fragile thing! To make it obvious or point it out ruins it, yet so many people never see it. OK! I GIVE UP! The comment about Henry K. was meant in fun. I hardly think that I would leave the fate of the world in the hands of any man.

To Ms. Extrom: Yes, Mr. Wrobel was kidding about the voting restrictions. His letter was one of the most masterful pieces of satirical writing that I have encountered in a Dip sine. As for your choice of being killed rather than killing, I doubt it. But just for a moment let's pretend that you are not the one being threatened. Let's say, just for argument's sake, that it is Samantha that is being hurt or is about to be hurt. Do you still think that you would react the same way? I admire those of you who think that man (I'd better fix that) human kind is good. I don't believe that; I can't believe that. My father taught me a very interesting view of morality: what would be the reaction if most (but not all) of the people in the world did what I am about to do? If the reaction is desirable then the action is moral. Let's examine some of the fundamental questions under that premise. Killing: if we kill for little or no reason it is obviously wrong. If, however, we kill to protect ourselves, our family, or our property then it serves a valid purpose in society. Killing is immoral, unless done for self-preservation. Stealing: the morality of stealing depends on the circumstances. If I am starving and have no other way to obtain food, then it is OK. If I am lazy and steal because it is easier, then it is wrong. Running a stop sign on a deserted road in the dead of night: if I do it, and someone on the cross street does it, and we can't see each other, then we will both die; therefore I always stop. I hope and pray that Samantha never gets hurt. Who will help her if she does?

Most of the preceding paragraph was meant to prove a point, not to impugn anyone's intelligence or capabilities. I am sure that someone as intelligent and caring as Joan will be a fine parent for Samantha, I just couldn't allow the comment about allowing herself to be raped go by.

My wife would like for me to point out that most of the "humor" I submitted last time (annish) was given to me by my wife. I told my wife that I wasn't about to waste space in my letter for such a trivial matter and that she was welcome to write her own letter. (The preceding is an attempt at humor, not just another stupid contradiction. The disclaimer really takes something out of it, don't you think?) ((Yes, I do. People who add disclaimers to their satire really spoil it for everyone and ought to be kicked out of the sine.)) ((Just kidding.))

The annish: what can I say? Two research papers are going to be late, but what do you care about my grades? Joan's computer article was hilarious, Chuff's "Postage Due" was great, Ed's truth very Hemingwayish, RIGEL's the same, Fluspher is weird, Meinel is jealous, poll results interesting (broken record?), cartoon on page 98 is unmentionable, "Variations" interesting and will probably inspire some insipid fool with a computer (are you listening, Cupcake?) to try and verify your hypothesis. Jedry's "Hunting" really proves the point, and the rest is very entertaining. I believe the only solution to the Toady of the Year controversy is a duel. You and Jim-Bob head out to the meadow on a cold, foggy morning, stand back to back with dueling pistols in hand, take 10 steps away from each other, turn and shoot yourselves. Whoever shoots himself first wins.

Issue #86: I can't make one small comment without Rod Walker turning it into an entire article! Why does he sound like he is arguing with me when he is really agreeing? I thought it was common knowledge that California was going to divide into two states: everything west of the San Andreas fault and everything east of it. The eastern half will be called California, the western half "Atlantis".

"Their are three errors in this sentence." Puts your brain into a continuous loop, doesn't it?

Cupcake was right. I couldn't care less.

The infamous "Doomie of the Year" contest! My first one! Great, another project. Oh well, who wants to graduate anyway?

Since the major topic of conversation seems to have shifted to Affirmative Action then I will confine comment to that. Too political indeed! One can never be too political. The problem began, as Nelson so eloquently pointed out, far back in American history. The solution will occur sometime far in the future. That makes us the ones most responsible for starting that solution. Rod's comments are entirely accurate. I don't think that he meant to say that the inner-city dwellers were holding us hostage as much as he was attempting to point out that theirs is a particularly frustrating situation, which will lead to violence. We have to get these disadvantaged people educated, one way or another. I would prefer to educate them on more fundamental levels, like high school. Doing so would require no scholarships or even have to mention race (please note that I haven't mentioned it yet, as I think the problem of perpetual poverty transcends the color barrier). The federal government should channel a lot of money into the local school systems. The problem with that is that the Fed can't do anything without attaching strings. You people want money for lunches? Well we get to set the menus, regardless of the fact that one national menu is a ridiculous concept, and that we don't have any idea what children in your area like to eat. What good are hot lunches that are never eaten? I read an interesting fact the other day: the two richest, best school districts in Texas take pride in the fact that they don't accept any federal aid, even though they could. They don't want the strings. The nation was based on the premise that we are all created equal, not that equality is the ending goal. But are we all created equally? Is the child born in Watts given the same opportunities as the child born in Martha's Vineyard? Not now, probably never. It is our duty as a society to try to equalize the opportunity for a quality education.

Love,
Greg

((When we equalize by helping the poor catch up to the fortunate, that is fine. When we take away from the fortunate to accomplish this goal, that is wrong.

The western half called "Atlantis"? Speaking of three errors in a sentence... the San Andreas Fault does not divide California in half; it merely slices off a thin and tiny fraction of the southwestern part of the state. Atlantis was (supposedly) in the Atlantic Ocean and not the Pacific, and the common belief that part of California is going to slide off into the ocean is impossible from a tectonic standpoint, since all of California is continental crust, not ocean crust. I may not know politics that well, but your statement rubbed some raw geological nerves in this mad scientist.

By the way, that wasn't Joan's article; she just submitted it. It was printed, I believe, in the computer magazine Integration.

Your counterexample to Joan's statement that she would not kill even to defend herself against rape is a good one. I think there are very few people in this world (and Joan is not one of them) who would let their child die rather than kill the attacker, given a hard-and-fast choice between the two. I personally believe that killing is wrong, yet I would do it to protect myself, my family or close friends, or my country. In those situations it would become the lesser of two evils.))

From Ken Peel (11/29/83):

Dear BRUX:

As you have undoubtedly noticed, I am sending you an almost final version of World Diplomacy IV. There will be a few more changes in the air forces and construction

center rules, but this is basically it. Mark Stegeman (school address MIT Econ. PhD program, 15 Dartmouth St., #2, Somerville, MA 02145) and I will be entering WD into the regular hobby through a demonstration game in Politesse. Gasp! Yes, in a mine (formerly) dedicated to PDF play! The game itself will be run directly from Mark, who will GM by flyer on three-week deadlines. Ed Wrobel will be playing, as will several of our regular WD players. Among others, I am specifically asking if you would like to play. With only a slight delay, the game will also appear in Politesse with "expert" commentary by yours truly, and a hot game of bourse. If you can't play, perhaps you know of others as worthy of this great honor. Not laying it on too thick, I hope... In any case, isn't it about time to get your fingers back in the honey pot?

If you keep letters on file, pull out my first and you'll remember that a group of us have been playing WD by mail since 1978 totally unaware of Dipdon at large or the existence of any other Dip variants. The only common roots WD has with any other variants are in regular straight-up Diplomacy itself.

((I'm flattered by your invitation, though I'll have to decline because I'm overextended in the hobby now. However, I'll bet there are Doomed out there who might be interested in trying WD, and anyone reading this who is so interested should write to Ken Pool at 8708 First Ave., #T-2, Silver Spring, MD 20910. It looked intriguing, although I personally prefer the simplicity of regular Dip.))

From G.W. Blender, U.S. Postal Service, Bloomington, IN (11/3/83):

Dear Mr. Linsey,

So you thought you could get away from us, did you?! Leaving Albany as you did was certainly clever on your part, but it didn't take us long to track you down. You'll have to run farther than Massachusetts, Mr. Linsey, to escape the arms of the U.S. Postal Service.

It was no difficult task discovering your new hideout. We merely followed the Krazy Envelopes to your new residence, traced other mail emanating from various other members of your tidy little "network": Mr. Berch, Mr. Walker, Mr. Kleiman, Mr. Afflerbach, Mr. Wrobel, etc., etc., to name but a few. We had even noticed that mail trucks leaving western Massachusetts were running considerably overweight as of late. We even asked your mother, who -- without hesitation -- gladly informed us of your new address and telephone number. We'd have phoned you, Mr. Linsey, to set this matter straight, but after all, we are the U.S. Postal Service.

To get to the heart of this matter, Mr. Linsey, we must ask that you immediately cease publication of the "new", "revised" -- whatever you prefer to refer to them as -- house rules. Why is the U.S. Postal Service concerned about such an insignificant and trivial matter as the Voice of Dogs house rules? Frankly, Mr. Linsey, it's a matter of economics. The U.S. Postal Service stands to lose a lot of revenue if your house rules lose their bulk. Our experts estimate that the "new", "improved" ("Improved"?! We don't think so!) house rules will require but 37¢ postage -- yes, even for Mr. Arneswoodian -- to send to your loyal followers. Of course, Mr. Linsey, we're not including the envelope and printing costs, but then, we're not making any of that money. But, nonetheless, the U.S. Postal Service may lose several million dollars in the wake of this development. And, Mr. Linsey, need we remind you that you may be liable for criminal prosecution, not to mention the enforced stoppage of any mail you might send or receive?

More importantly, however, Mr. Linsey, the U.S. Postal Service may again be forced to raise postage rates, all because of your disregard of our warnings. The previous enforcements would have been relative to the guilt experienced knowing that you, Mr. Linsey, are single-handedly responsible for this next postage increase.

The U.S. Postal Service has spoken. Have a good day.

From Tom Swider:

Hi BRUX!

Dalton, MA? That's as obscure a place as Endwell. Well, it's inevitable, but it has to be said... I HATE COBOL! It's obsolete. It's too wordy. Has no advantage. Makes PILOT look good! Well, I suppose companies who sink millions into a system want their money's worth.

One thing I've been meaning to mention is about VD's favorite topic of hunting. Though I haven't experienced the hunt, those who have enjoy it. It almost seems wrong to condemn something without having done it before. To those of a rural upbringing, hunting is quite acceptable. I know three hunters: my Dad, Keith Mercer, and Carl Ruseell.

On the way back from MaryCon Carl, Jeff Bohner, Tom Mainardi and I were bull-hitting and I mentioned this topic. Tom, being a city boy, and Carl were figuratively at each other's throats. Jeff sort of sided "pro-life" and I was neutral. (I won't make claims till I've experienced hunting.) I did feel sorry for Carl; it was as if he was guilty of doing a "terrible" deed, even though he has always been told that hunting is the norm.

Have you ever heard of the "Survival" game? You know, it's where you pair off into two teams and try to capture the enemy's flag, while shooting the enemy with paint guns?

Black holes? I only wish I had enough time to write letters. I felt I owed you one; it's sort of odd how things like friendships can get misrouted. I'm really glad you and Kathy are talking again. The "vicious circle" (quoted from Common Sense for Hard Times, not Jeff Noto (!)) has completed another circuit. Hopefully, a lesson has been learned somewhere...

I will see you at ByrneCon in a week. I'm bringing Civilization and Titan along with my FTF Final Conflict map/pieces. Maybe I can get you to like my rectangular "sea boxes"; if not, I'll nuke you! (☺)

Is Albany as bad a place as I've heard? Sort of like Binghamton; its major industry is government, right? A friend of mine who went to SUNY Albany mentioned something about a "bi" trying to pick him up in front of a public water fountain downtown. Barro said jobs aren't too good, and you left to prove that point.

Turns out I'll be shuffling off to Buffalo next fall to keep Nelson in line. Albany sounds too much like Bingo for my tastes.

ECLIPSE was the only other VD 18-center win. It was a fun game, so I couldn't forget it. Are you sure Dave Kleiman isn't a Dave Claman pseudonym?

You might mention to Jake Halverstadt that GDW just released their game on US Presidential elections. Don't know much about it yet...

PS. GAAAAAARGOYYYYYYYLLLLLEEE!

PFS. John Kelley?!? I thought he died and went to college.

PPFS. No PPS.

PPPPS. I play in a game in the British hobby. People in the British hobby write even less than most N.A. dippers.

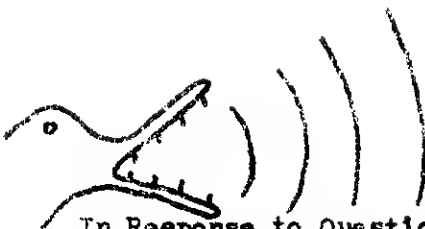
((And in my experience, that's not a whole lot! Glad to discover another Doome with European ties.

OK, I was wrong. Somebody besides me did remember Dave Kleiman's win in ECLIPSE. Personally, I thought it was a pretty dreadful game. The only good part about it was my postal flying dutchman. (☺)

Albany's not a horrible city; there aren't too many bad sections and there are plenty of good pizza places. I remember a while back when Eric Kane, who rolled a one, came up to visit and he and Alex and I spent an afternoon exploring the South Mall in the downtown section. There's a lot to do there.

I recently read an article somewhere about "Survival", and it sounds like fun.

So those who have experienced the hunt have enjoyed it, eh? Dear me, I doubt that opinion is unanimous...))



BRUX Speaks

20

In Response to Questions Regarding His Ways of Running Things

Several questions have recently been posed to me, or comments directed toward me, concerning some of my publishing and GMing philosophies. Discussions of this nature have always fascinated me (although much of my readership undoubtedly finds them boring and pointless), so I'd like to reply to a bunch of these questions and comments in one fell swoop, using an interview-type format. Hopefully, some of you will be angered/inspired enough by what you read to send in your opinions for the Gossip Column. It's been too long since we've had a good rules discussion in VD!

Q: Don't you feel that, by GMing as strictly as you do, you are interfering in the game? Why not give the player a break, especially when his intent is clear?

A: These questions were put to me by Eric Kane, who rolled a one. I do not feel that my strict approach to GMing interferes in the game at all. I as a GM have an effect on the game -- and so does every other GM. My style of GMing tends to penalize the careless players and thereby reward the careful ones, while more lenient GMs do just the opposite.

It is incorrect, in my opinion, to say that the lenient GM is "giving the players a break". Did you ever hear the law of physics that states that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction? Precisely the same law holds true in the adjudication of Diplomacy games: for every player who is "given a break" by the GM's ruling, there is another player whose position is hurt by it. I would sooner give the "breaks" to the players who earn them through careful play than to their less cautious opponents.

Finally, and I know that many GMs disagree, I do not view it as the GM's role to determine the player's intent. As one who is handicapped by the inability to read minds, I feel safer just adjudicating what the player wrote down. Ed Wrobel's intent was clear to me when he double-ordered his armies, but double-order them he did -- and that's the way I had to adjudicate it. It was quite clear to me that Mark Duarte's "Fleet England to Brest" was intended as an order for his fleet in the English Channel, but there was only one English fleet in England at the time (it was in Edi), and it could not legally move to Brest anyway. The order failed. I interpret very literally. It is not "wrong", nor is it "interference". It is another perfectly valid way of GMing, available to those who like it and avoidable for those who don't.

Q: Your houserules are ridiculous / too long / silly / dogshit.

A: Really? Which ones?

Q: Why don't you try, just once, running a game without houserules?

A: John Caruso asked this, adding that he'd be willing to try a game under me if it weren't for my houserules. My knee-jerk answer at the time was that I wouldn't be comfortable running a game this way. While this is true, there is in fact a much more appropriate answer.

You see, the question is rather meaningless to begin with, to anyone who truly understands the philosophy underlying my houserules. If I were to run a "game without houserulee", every single ruling I would make would be identical to those I make now. The only difference between the two is that with the houserules, the players are informed of these rulings in advance; without them, they are not. Since I cannot see any advantage to keeping the players in the dark regarding the GM's procedures, I do not see any point to running a "game without houserulee".

It is well to note that my houserules do not lock me into making rulings which defy common sense, as some people (like Peter Ansoff) seem to think. Rather, they merely reflect the rulings which I would regard as common sense anyway. And for the rare,

extreme situation in which my houserulee would dictate a ruling which does not coincide with my idea of common sense, I would invoke the "Greater Good" rule and overrule the offending houserule. If I have to do this often (and I won't), it would indicate that the other houserules were poorly designed to begin with.

Q: Are you GMing for the enjoyment of the players or just yourself? If you do it for the players, then how do you justify a GMing technique which leads to more miswritten orders than would more lenient GMing?

A: Eric Kane asked me these questions shortly after rolling a one. I am GMing to please both myself and my players. Over a third of the respondents to my poll question on this topic prefer that the GM be as strict as I am. The others don't have to play under me. It is not necessary for me to speculate on the reasons that so many players want strict GMing. They do, and I provide to please both them and myself.

Q: Your letter column is too long and too boring, and contains letters which pat you on the back.

A: Thanks to Terry Tallman for both criticisms, and to Bob Ouch for seconding the latter one.

"Boring" is a subjective term. If my letter column was indeed too long, very few people if any would be writing in to it. It is true that I edit less than most other publishers for excess verbiage. But I do edit. Fudging gets the ax as of recently, as do letters that I don't think are of general interest to the readership. Some stuff like "gimme a sample" or "here's my sub check" makes it into print, and for that matter, so do a few of the "Golly, Bruce, that was a hell of an issue" letters. But not by themselves, unless they are written in an interesting manner (see Marc Peters' letter in VD #85 for a very entertaining "here's my sub check" letter). Such comments generally make it into print only as part of a longer letter discussing other, more substantial topics. "Asskissing" gets published, though not just for the sake of publishing asskissing. But it doesn't automatically get the ax, either. A recent letter from John MacFarlane contained a comment about my amish that made me glow with delight. However, the letter contained nothing that I felt would be of interest to the readers at large, so I did my glowing in private. (And had to write this article just so I could tell you about it. The lengths I'll go to...) In contrast, I will publish almost any critical letter I get, unless the writer requests otherwise.

I don't like to edit letters too much, and I think most correspondents appreciate knowing that their letters have a good chance of seeing print in their entirety and (usually) promptly. When polled, 72% of those of you who replied said they enjoyed the letter column very much, and almost 30 of you mentioned it as your favorite part of the sline. Perhaps those figures would increase if I edited more, but I doubt it. I am very happy with my current editorial policies, and so are most of you.

Finally (snicker), the same comment that I made regarding my GMing can be applied to my letter column. If ya dasn't likes it, there are other letter column for ya to read...

Q: You have no business recruiting novices for your games, with the ultra-strict houserulee you use.

A: What an absurd statement, Bob Ouch! What ever gave you the idea that novices are any less able to write correct orders than anyone else? Many, many players got their start in VD. A few of the less careful ones have left for more lenient GMing. Most have been very satisfied. All six of the players currently in the RIGEL game were relatively new to postal play when the game began as an all-novice game. All six have indicated that they are very happy with the way I have run their game. And all

eix (I believe) are currently playing in other zines as well, so they have a standard of comparison.

I make it a point to mention the way I GM whenever I open games. Novices, and any other potential players, can give my system a try if they so desire. It is in my opinion very important that a newcomer's first game be run in a prompt, reliable, and fair manner, and so I shall continue to try and recruit them into my games.

A quick note about my "ultra-strict" GMing. Is it really that much stricter than that found elsewhere, or does it just get more publicity? The "Wrobel Affair" with the double-ordered units got a lot of press for its "strictness", but a lot of other GMs would have ruled the same way: Mike Conner and Brad Wilson (both of whom actually have; you just don't hear as much about it), Don Del Grande, Ron (Canada) Brown, Ron (California) Brown, John Boardman, Dave Kleiman, Jim Meinel, Paul Ruaterberg, Eric Ozog, Steve Hutton...you get the idea. Hey gang, it's rather crowded at this end of the spectrum! But I'm getting awfully sidetracked.

Q: What is the procedure for protesting a ruling in a VD game? Why can't a player always have an ombudsman on request?

A: The procedure for registering a protest is set forth in my house rules. The player must make his protest known to me before the following deadline. Once this is done, I can respond in any of three ways:

- 1) If I have clearly made an error, I will correct it and proceed with the game.
- 2) If I still feel that I ruled correctly, but find the player's argument at all reasonable, I will go to an ombudsman for resolution. His decision shall be final.
- 3) If the player's protest is clearly in error, I will explain my ruling and proceed with the game without calling an ombudsman.

Only in situation 2 is an ombudsman used. Situation 3 is the one on which people question me, so let me back it up with a couple of examples.

Once, a long time ago, a player in VD passed through Spain in a Spring turn and moved out in the Fall. He then argued that he should have been given possession of Spain for that year. The player's protest was clearly wrong, so I explained why and proceeded with the game.

In the MILKY WAY game, a player protested that he had vetosed a successful game-ending proposal over the phone. He hadn't. He called for an ombudsman, and I refused his request. Not only would a third party be absolutely unable to determine what had actually been said during this (supposed) phone conversation, but the house rules in VD provide that there can be no disputing that what the GM heard, wrote down, and read back to the player is what the player said; in other words, you use the phone at your own risk. The player had no case, and the ruling stood, although I ended up restarting the game anyway when all seven of the players agreed to it.

The reason that I feel I can do this is that I've been GMing long enough to know the rules of the game, and my house rules, quite thoroughly. I would not recommend that a newer GM be too quick to refuse someone an ombudsman; I know that after a year or two of GMing, I was still not always certain of my ground, and in fact I didn't adopt my current procedure for player protests until fairly recently.

A few more words about those situations in which I would refuse to go to an ombudsman for a player: some people may (and do) think that this is unfair; that a player should always have the right of protest. Players who feel strongly about this are advised to play in other zines, some of which conform to this standard. VD does not.

Finally on this point, it has been mentioned to me that there is some value in calling an ombudsman even when the player is clearly wrong, simply to placate the player. I, however, do not feel it is necessary to placate players in this manner; simply pointing out why my ruling was correct to begin with should suffice. God, I am a hardass, aren't I?

Moving on, once a dispute has been resolved (either with or without an ombudsman), a player who is unhappy with the outcome does have some recourse. He can:

- 1) resign from the game.
- 2) seek to have the game moved to another GM, or
- 3) seek to have the game declared irregular by the Boardman Number Custodian.

A request to have the game moved would be made and publicized just as would a draw proposal. If all players voted to move, and reimbursed me for my expense, I would assist in the transfer so that it would go as smoothly as possible. To date, no such request has been formally made by a VD player.

Seeking an irregular ruling is drastic, and unlikely to be fruitful since none of the VD houserules extend beyond the bounds of acceptable GMing procedure. The Boardman Number Custodian has given me permission to state that she does not think that strict GMing, taken by itself, is actual grounds for irregularity (although her opinion and mine differ radically on its desirability, of course).

The bottom line of this whole matter is that players in VD have got to have no small measure of confidence in my judgement. Players who don't are welcome to...well, you all know what I'm about to say here, eh?

Q: Your policy concerning multiple sets of orders, some of which are undated or identically dated, is to use only the orders common to both or all of the sets which might possibly have been the last sent. Don't you feel that it would be less harmful to select a set at random, or use some other mechanism for choosing one of the sets, than to (wholly or partially) NMR a player who in fact has orders on file?

A: This question was posed to me at Byrnecon. My answer is no.

It is the player's job to date his orders correctly. If I choose a set of orders without ascertaining that they are the latest set sent in, I might have the guy stabbing his ally when in fact he had changed his mind about it. The result could be that his board position is hurt much more than it would have been by an NMR.

But that's really pretty much beside the point. The point is that the GM must adjudicate what he is supposed to adjudicate, regardless of the harm done to anyone's board position. What he is supposed to adjudicate is the latest set of orders received -- and if this cannot be determined, then the player is out of luck.

Q: An English player orders A Swe-Kie, expecting a convoy from the Russian F Bal. He also orders A Nwy S A Swe, in case the convoy is not forthcoming. If Russia stabs and doesn't order the convoy, is the support valid?

A: Thanks to Stephen Wilcox, who asked this question in The Little Dipper, a subzine to The Prince. This is more of a straightforward question on GMing than the others posed in this article.

The support does not succeed because a unit legally ordered to move cannot be supported in place even if the move fails. And the order to move was legal because, at the beginning of the turn in question, a convoy route existed from Swe to Kie. Had no convoy routes existed, the move is impossible and the army is treated as holding, and the support would have succeeded.

A somewhat similar question is this: how would I rule A Con-Blg? It's a move to Bulgaria unless a convoy route to Belgium exists, and in that case it is ambiguous. This is so regardless of the nationality of the fleets in the convoy route, or what orders they actually receive. If Turkey orders A Con-Blg and a move to Belgium is possible, then the order is disallowed even if Turkey also has F Aeg and orders it to support A Con-Bul!

The underlying principle in these rulings is that the meaning and/or legality of an order can in fact be determined by the position of other units at the beginning of the turn, but it can never be determined by what other units are ordered to do during the turn. This same principle applies in VD in the resolution of orders containing "Nor" or "North" or "Liv", by the way. A Den-Liv can have four possible resolutions, depending on the locations of fleets at the start of the turn. It could mean a move to Livonia if a convoy route there was present and no convoy route to Liverpool exists.

or it could be a move to Liverpool if the opposite circumstance held true, or it could be illegal if neither route exists, or ambiguous if both do. How's that grab ya?! F Den-Nor works in VD, but F Edi-Nor does not, even in conjunction with F Lou-Nth and so on.

Q: Why are you stubbornly standing your ground on every single question in this article, rather than conceding a point or two here and there?

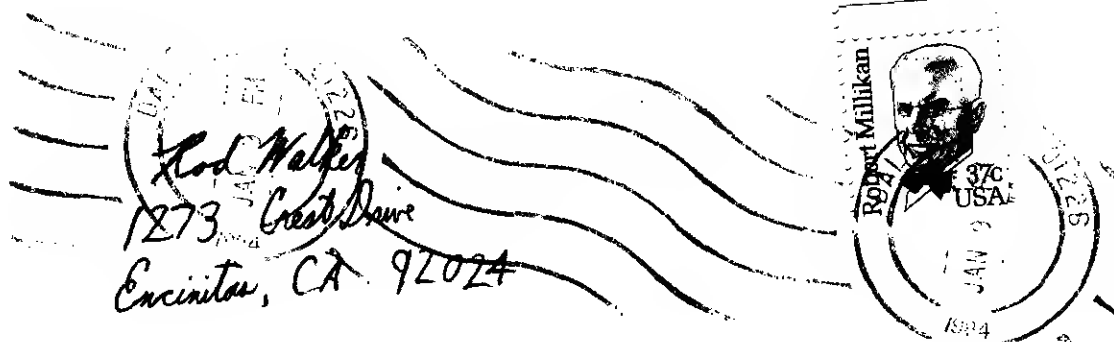
A: I'm not being stubborn. My answers are a reflection of the fact that I've been around long enough to hear all the questions many times over, and decide on which policies I like. If I felt uncomfortable about any of my replies above, the rulings would have long since been changed.

Crotchety old hobby fart, I am!

One late note before I close: a noted hobby personality from Rochester, writing in the latest issue of Politesse, has labeled my ruling on the Krobol Affair as "communist". My apologies to all -- I really thought I had made the correct decision, but when respected, level-headed hobby luminaries such as Bill Highfield come up with such persuasive reasons for the other side, maybe it's time to rethink my position.

BRUX

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Your sub expires with issue #97